PH, GRS; RD, HR; MF

4/28/71

Dear Jim,

This is a personal letter, to you only, not to your committee. It is prompted by several things you said last night without really thinking them through, what amounts to acceptance of the self-justification of others as fact, uncritical acceptance when you are in a position to know better. I say this and what follows not to criticize you but with any entirely idfferent motive. The time has come when I will not again even undertake to stop these interminable stupidities, all immoral and unethical, all part of the silly effort to make of the committee what it will never ben, cannot and ought not be, an effort to breathe left into the stillborn.

You may not be aware of it, but when Bud first organized his committee, he had his board of directors in mind before seeking membership. It is one of the reason no serious critic would join. I explained this and the other things, all of which proved true, to him, and as with Garrison, with Bud, on this, being right is next to criminal, and is the unforgivable. He had such ambition, such nobility of purpose, and all that.

There have always been serious disputes between the major critics, and it is not to be unexpected because we are all people of strongly-held beliefs. But the fact is that on no case has any dispute prevented the closest collaboration, the trusted sharing, the help with egoh others work that now, even after so long a time, seems hard to believe could exist. Quite the contrary of that selfishness horeshit Bud and Bob feed you, I have always submitted my work to the crifical comment of others before publication. With WHITEWASH, which was completed before I knew any others were working in the field (save Mark), after publication of the limited edition, it did it also with that, prior to printing, once I learned of others, and to several members of the press (including Tom Wicker and Harrison Salisbury, among those who read it seriously; Dan Kurzman, who also did, Larry Stern, who did not. there may have been others). People of strongly-held belief often express them strongly, depending on their characters. But let me cite to you the vigor of my dispute with Paul Hoch over his melon work. That did not in any way impair our relationship. We still trust each other, still work cooperatively, and I am certain (on my part at least) still respect each other. If Paul does not now realize it, I have no doubt he will come to understand that as I was concerned about the impact on what we all, in different ways seekm, I was seriously worried about what this, eventually, would have meant to him as a person. There are a few of the nuts who have some resentment at what they regard as a fatherly attitude on my part. It is a natural byproduct of years. I am old enough to be the father of most, the grandfather of some, and I have had more experience with life, its forces and ways. I see and understand what those with less experience often do not, and I am content to rest on the established validity of, if not all, close to it, for in almost all cases it is already stablished. With small people, this sometimes results in bitterness and resentment that is not expressed in t rms of that old bastard was right but, in such cases alone, with psychological devices. This is not to say that I have always been right, never make mistakes, but I'll stack this record against any other, for all the errors I have made, of judgement and of trust. I am as, in time, you will come to realize, rather outgoing and trusting. Your new board member, Mary, when she was here, did in fact give me hell for trusting so m any people, with the result that so much of my stuff disappears. One minor example of which you have knowledge is the John George picture, the only copy I had. In this case I still recall clearly what happened to it, as you should. And you also should be aware of its possible value, hence of its disappearance.

Let me explain what may seem like a lack of continuity in this. After your call last night, I was at least a deeply upset as I reflected. I had trouble going to sleep, which is quite rare, was so disturbed that it made my heart beat irregularly. The physical and medical toll of the years has been heavy, for I also have worked continuously, longer, I believe, than any others, under more unfavorable donditions, of some of which your are

aware. The emotional toll has been heavy, and such things as Garrison and now Bud are worst in this area. At the moment, what I do not have to tell you about the pyblisher contributes. So, I forced myself to stay in bed later than usual, even if without sleeping, and I write this in pieces because there are the morning things, like shaving, and writing this is a disagreeable reliving, so I do it in spurts.

What you will come to understand is that the only reason I am taking time to do this now, to write this at all, is for you. Now you may not see it that way, but you may understand better if you understand, by asking yourself, that it can mean nothing for for me, do nothing for me. What other purpose could I by any means serve?

As I said earlier, I am older than all others, and I do have a sort of fatherly interest in those few I do like and do respect and of whom, in the end, I do hope for meaningful contributions. You are going to have to live in the future with this part of your life, and the future always beings the insight of hindsight. It can be uncomfortable. This, too, is a function of years. I do not think you will be happy if you are parg of something that, regardless of your motives or those others thing they havem you in retrospect thing was either not good or not moral and ethical, that did wrong or bad things, that defeated or impaired the enormous work of others.

You may dispite that this newest immorality and stupidity, for it is both, with Boggs, follows my sending Bud copies of my letters. The obvious is something that oftens escapes many. In retrospect, everyone may think something so obvious he also thought of it immediately. But I think it not likely that this business was not an effort to take over what I had initiated, and trusted all of you with. Not knowing the date Bob started on it, or how, I cannot of course come up with proof. I can usggest that the time interval bears heavily my way. I can also suggest that, especially with this alleged fear of my my "wrath", the most obvious and the completely normal thing to have done would have been to acknowledge my letter with a simple comment to the effect that you-all had had the same idea independently and were taking your own approach to it. This, coming immediately, woul would have at least addressed that question. But honest people (in other areas) have trouble being dishonest. Bishops are not the best pickpockets. Failure to do this and particularly the injunction to secrecy, so that no word of it would get back to me, leave little doubt in my mind and I tell you frankly that untill there is proof that makes it possible to believe your version, I simply do not and see no basis for it.

There is a record that addresses this perfectly. It was equally obvious that with the breaking of the Army Intelligence story the same thing should have occurred to all of us who knew of Powell. You people knew less, had done less, knew of it only recently. Others of us had worked on it long, long before your committee existed. But your committee has arrogated, or attempted to arrogate to itself, authorities, functions and responsibilities it does not have and cannot exercise. So, there is an easy moraliti in all of this that tends to obscure what stripped of all the self0justification becomes no more than unethical. With the Army stuff there is and can be no doubt. You can check your own files files on this. I wrote the Army, sent Bud copies, and later there suddenly bloossomed ed his original idea, or Bobs, to issue that crazy release. How much later you can recall without checking your files, for it was not until Bud's office party that I blundered into it. When the reaction to my destruction of that stupidity/vanity was resistance, I was wrathful. But I was also right, and it died, and you were saved, and all of us were saved hurt. Had I not lost my cool, so powerfully, there would have been this great blunder, this great help to the other side, something they could have achieved a credibilit by simply shooting it down. Aside from all of this, there was another apsect, I have a Have a special case against the Army intelligence. But Bud is unwilling to share even that which is the property of others with others. It all belong to him, in his mind, simple because he has the great committee, great only because it is his, great only in the dishonesty publicity he has created for it.

The approach to the Army was my idea alone. Bud, Bob or both stole it. Collectively you could not handle it, It came out as stupid and the kind of thing that had to do worse than fail and worse, help them. But my central point here is moral andethtical. Knowing this, if you can recall the beginning of this argument, you must recall that I was not wrathful, that I was calm, and that I did not get angry until there was not alternative approach, for that enormous stupidity had to be prevented. I think the record here addressed the sequences with Boggs. The possible consequences with Boggs are worse, anf they may have the by-product of ruining any chance of any Congressional collaboration in the future.

On the questions of ethics and morality I remind you od the Ray case. For all he spent, for all the time and collaboration from incompetents he had, Bud came up with nothing except child's stuff, nothing significant. On the other hand, I did make a deal with him. He considered it impossible, but I pulled it off. My terms were clear, explicit and agreed to. So, after I do all this work, after I get him his client and give him his case (and he even stuck me for what are for me considerable phone bills-when I asked for them he actually said he didn't have the money!), what does he do but say it is his committee that has done the work I did, and that Flammonde, who isn't even a competent crook, was his investigator. He took Flammonde to Europe (youe explanation, that F's publisher paid his expenses, doesn't stack, for F had no publisher). Now when I had my book done, it is pretty obvious that I had no personal gain involved in my pre-condition that I be the investigator on the case. As I have told you many time, Bud has to be protected from Bud. He is also a suck for any kind of curve or drop, swinging wildly at what ought be ignored. He had no koney to live up to his agreement, to take me with him when he went to see Ray, after I got him the case, but he had for all sorts of other and uniformly wasteful things, like Europe, which is the Huie mistake, what could have yielded nothing except to the devotee of the cheapst of poor detective fiction. The real work to be done, in Memphis in particular, was never approached. Bud is incapable of it. My little time there was very productive, as to a degree you know. And the more I succeed, the more Bud resents.

I can give you much more, but this is enough to put you into a position to make an independent judgement. One thing I add: I got from Ray what hobody else did the one time I saw him. Dies this make Bud happy? No. He still doesn't keep me filled in. How much of this do you think I'll put up with? Or should? You tell me who you know who would have put up with as much?

Yet through all of this time, I was keeping you, until it became impossible, you collectively, with the essence of my successes, and you damned well know this. Now show me one t ing you collectively produced that you shared with me. And I'm the selfish, I'k the paranoid? Can you reall tell yourself this?

Bud's judgement is miserable. Every time he fails to consult with me, and it is his ego alone that precludes it, for whenever he has asked me to go to DC, whether or not I could afford either the slight cost or the time, I did. Going back to the Halleck case, he didn't consult me about Forman, and that was, as I told Bud as soon as he didp a real disaster. I have never said anything about it, save in PMIII (and I want the immediate return of both of those books), giving all the credit to Bud, but again I get him his case after he lost it, prepped his witnesses with what they didn't see, I think but am not sure arranged for Wecht, but I can play you the tapes of my showing him what he did not see, fought Garrison through to his agreement to continue, brought back authori zation for Bud to continue, and then had a very taxing fight with Salandria to get the thing going again. Bud got credit for this victory, but I did the work. And I've been silent. So, the question of egos is easily addressed.

Time after time this is the case. Time after time I were silent about these things.

I did take you and Bill aside once and tell you the consequences unless there was a change, that I couldn't bell the cat and you'd have to. You failed, If I have to, I will not. I may be too late, but you believe me, Jim, I'll do it. If I do not, all the work I've done, at all this great cost, the ruin of our lives and our futures will be a futility. That I will not accept.

Let me address Sprague. You are welcome, as you've long known, to see my files on him. You will find that as I have had to drain myself to frustrate the enormous damage he did that could be prevented, and I can't begin to describe the cost, in money and physical and emotional drain, that I have spent an enormous amount of painstaking time over the years in trying to put a little common sense into his noodle. Even recently. You know of some. What you do not know is that his wife drew me aside and thanked me at Bud's party. Little as she knows, she does know he is nuts about this. I did not lean on him at the party until there was no choice, and what I then did that he later found so uncongenial is to charge him with responsibility for any consequences. I also not only told him but proved to him that he knew so goddamned little he ought never open his mouth. It is this that in retrospect he found so uncongenial, and it is, unfortunately, true. I took his appearance on the Fred Gale show in New York and parsed it like a sentence. There was on it so single factual or accurate thing he said. In fact, that disaster was so great that when I did the Gale show six weeks ago, and Fred has long been a friend of mine, Fred asked me afterward if all these guys were nuts. He still likes Bud, but the others he doesn't want to see again. If a man who knows so little about the case as Fred, but is genuine and concerned, can see this, can you imagine how bad they really were? Remember, I told you I had beensent this tape, told you to listen to it, and you didn't.

There is no chance that in a long lifetime Sprague, regardless of the purity of his inetnetions, can begin to undo the harm he has done us. How can you expect me to continue to take this? Or to be silent in the faceof it, to not even try to do something? Or how can you expect Dick to like it when faced with it in a way he cannot escape. It simply was necessary to try and close that nonstop flapjaw before somebody gets killed, and that, now is a distinct possibility, whether or not you know it. The great boon is that he didn't tell your flapjaw committee, which has the rentntion of an oversize sieve, all he was told. The rest I had to try and keep locked inside that blownup head.

Dick was very uncomfortable after he thought it over. We all have egos, and his was deeply hurt. So, he got sore. But if you have the slightest doubt about what happened, I adre you to get him to go over it with me in front of you.

There is no point incontinuing with the specifics. I could write a book about them, they ar that many. I am trying only yo open your eyes and mind, for I do not want you to look back in sorrow, to be hurt when you seek good, to feel later that you have sadly abused you wife, been part of hurt. But as of today, your committee has done about as much good as Garrison. It is as selfish and selfOseeking as he and if it has come up with anything that in aby way helps forward what we are all supposed to be seeking, it has been kept secret from me. As you know, so far as cooperation is concerned, it is you only. Bob didn't even get the copy of the Archives regulations I asked of him. Whiht reminds me of another picture of Bud you should know. Some time back, before he moved his office, I got there one day and he was all smiles and said, in almost these exact words, " we have (finally, at long last!) gotten something you don't have". What was it? Exhibit 710 (and even that Bob didn t begin to get in full). Hell, we'd had that for years. It had then been in COUP for two years. But Bud's unique genius is that he buys all the shit not already down the hppper, reads that, and ignores meaningful work. For that he has no reading time. But I give you a picture of his jealousy, his attitude.

What I am really addressing is how he can be so nice a guy in so many ways and on

this be so corrupt and dishonest -and how in the future eh will emerge from this whole, not sick, as Garrison is. I do not want that to happen. But I cannot long take the time for the effort to prevent it. Nor can I continue to permit the enormous easte of my time that he has caused. Come here some day and let me show you the amount of it reflected in things he asked me to do on paper that I did-to no end, for he forgot as soon as he asked, of he changed his mind, or he didn't read it.

Jim, we have a record to look back upon. I am the non-lawyer, but I think you will agree that substantially, even my legal judgements and recommnedations were the right ones. Where they were ignored, we fell. We might hot have avoided it had they not been ignored, but we'd have had a better reford.

I think you should also make your own estimate of the validity of the preoccupations of your committee, the total involvement in what any mature mind had to tell you was shit. It is incredible that so enormous an effort should have gone into so much that could not possibly be right and could not, were there the chance, be established. When the wild geese did not come in on their own, you people sentnative beaters out.

If you recall some of our argument at the time you began the computer project, you now, in the current issue, should see the validity of my then argument. What was fed into it was garbage. The basic work was not, so the basic work cannot be retrieved. Had it nay value at all, what Bon drafted would not have emerged in that form, if at all.

I address the false calim about lack of index. I gave each one of you, personally, copies of all my works and all the indexes. Those not printed in the book you had for xeroxing, and Sprague and Berkley also had and duplicated these. Only the first printing of WW is without index. I do not give those away. Besides, the few I have may some day have value, and I have very few. That edition sold out almost 100%.

Take my word for it, though you will not have this letter in time for it to make a difference in what I do, from now on, to the degree I can influence or control it, things will be different. Again I have to face our survival-mine and that of all of us. If you do not or cannot see it that way, I'm sorry, and I will not take more time to try and open your eyes. The political stupidities in this anonymous memo-ask yourself even why it is undated, and about that childish subtitle- are a discredit to all of you. Frankly, if you read it, I'm syrprised you did not see its boomerang potential. Right now I'm at the point where if the other side doesn't, I'll consider showing it to them. Not for vindictiveness, either, for it can be productive. And it is a shamefully dishonest method and approach. It is cheap, unfaithful, deceptive and can be as ruinous to Boggs as to us. Which brings me to where I now am.

I will not again repeat the total dishonesty of the thing to which I objected so strongly and what it can mean to what I now have in the works. It cannot be innocent. First of all, if the year-old promise had been kept, it would not have been there for Bob to use innocently. But with Bud there is and can be no innocence. You ought be asking yourself how, when he is in other wasy, the kidn of guy he is, on this subject he can misbehave so badly. But it confronts me witn that with which I must cope. If it is used in any way, it will not only kill the prospects of carrying that bit further, but it may kill the promising prospects I have for contextual use, for carrying it further, and for using it with the rest. If it does, then I have to consider that to which I next turn, I will be in New York, and I will be seeking out other possibilities. I have mentuoned one to you. Whether or not I can arrange it, you would be well advised to consider that I will try.

A year ago this unkept promise was made. I will not fight with Bud. It would achieve nothing, he would set his jaw and ignore what he wants to ignore. He probably will not admit it to himself, but he has made me too many promises he has not kept. I can't accept promises any more. Now I want more than a promise, and I realize the work this will require. I want the return of everything I have let any of you have, I want it now, and I want it completely. I want not only what is in your files but whatever copies have been permitted to be made. Regardless of source, too, for Bud got much of my work from that other epitome of personal integrity, Garrison. The sole exception is what is required for current litigation. I not only ask this, I expect it, and promptly. I simply cannot allow anything like this to happen again, and I do not propose to again be subjected to the kind of nervous and emptional straing this has caused. Neither my age nor the present condition of my health permits it.

I am surprised that you, personally, would go for that horsehit that I am so difficult to work with. You have worked with me. Take two cases: the clothing-lic suit and the spectro. Did we have a single problem with the former? Did you repeatedly not keep your schedules and dates on it, and did I not, in close to complete silence, accept this wasting of my times and limited means? When Bud said that the spectro case would go to the Supreme Court and he would do it, did I not let him do whatever he wanted, even when I disagreed with it? Did we have a single argument? Did I interpose any oserious objections? Was I, in fact, even consulted? Were the long analyses I prepared even consulted? Are the stupid errors so reflective of a lack of even the most basic knowledge of the fact of the assassination in any way justifiable? And the repetition of a serious one when I had caught it, but it is in the appeal? Have I ranted and raved about this very serious imposition upon me and my time? In each case I asked that I have time to review these papers for just this purpose, yet in both cases it was made impossible. The results speak for themselves, as does the record. And the same thing happened with Ray, in and before Memphis. If we are all prone to error, we are all old enough to know that others may catch them. What better reason for me not having the opportunity, when I have without deviation always been available, always found the time? I suggest you ask yourself is this is no more than accidental, or if it reflects something else, an incredible, childish jealousy.

There is not one of you who knows enough about the essential fact of any of the cases. How long will it take before you both realize it and act upon it? Is this jealously to dominate everything you all do and what the rest of us can or must live with? It is not fear of my "wrath" that discourages this. And I don't ask for the return of my travel expenses, of the parking fees I can't afford. When I am asked, I am there, and you damned well mnow it. I cool my heels, waste time, accept other personal abuses, but I am there.

I could rehash more, like Davison and that crazy, wrong whole business that killed what had potential. I ought not need to at this point. I can do the same thing with Congress, whether or not you know it, and with aspects of Tennessee. I content myself with Santayana: He who does not learn from the past is doomed to relive it.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg